

S E C R E T SANAA 000949

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [YM](#) [DOMESTIC](#) [POLITICS](#) [COUNTER](#) [TERRORISM](#)
SUBJECT: ROYG DECLARES END TO AL-HOUTHI REBELLION: SAADA
IS QUIET, FOR NOW

REF: A. IIR 690601205
B. SANAA 906

Classified By: DCM Nabeel Khoury for reasons 1.4 b and d.

11. (U) Summary. The ROYG claimed that it has ended the al-Houthi uprising in Saada, but isolated clashes continue. Initial casualty estimates show 280 killed from both sides in less than two weeks of clashes, but such figures may rise as more facts come to light. The main rebel leaders escaped capture, and remain at large in northern Yemen. Simmering hostilities caused by reportedly harsh ROYG tactics and tribal feuds may lead to continued violence on a lesser scale, and provide continued political fodder for both the ROYG and opposition parties. End summary.

12. (U) The ROYG issued an official statement on April 11 declaring an end to the uprising in Saada, and security forces claimed to have taken control of rebel strongholds. Fighting continued in isolated areas even as the ROYG declared an end to hostilities. Several sources reported clashes in Dammaj, about 50 miles south of Saada, where insurgents reportedly continued to offer resistance. Since the announcement, rebels have also assassinated a security officer in the Saada market and an army engineer in the region of Razamat, near the Saudi border. Nevertheless, residents of Saada confirm that violence has subsided and they are free to move about the city after two weeks of curfew.

13. (S) The number of casualties is difficult to confirm, but conservative estimates from hospitals and official reports show at least 280 people dead in two weeks of fighting and many more wounded. Tribal leaders and some opposition sources accuse the Ministry of Defense of using scorched earth tactics against civilians, calling them "Dharfur-like."

The opposition paper al-Wahdawi reported MOD use of helicopters to attack the Saada area of Habr, corresponding with other reliable reports of air strikes (ref A). On April 4, government troops reportedly destroyed at least six homes in al-Ramna, killing women and children.

14. (S) Opinions on the totality of the ROYG's victory vary greatly. Early reports that security forces killed or captured rebel leaders Badr Eddin al-Houthi, Abdullah Ayedh al-Razami, and Yussef al-Madani proved false. The nature of the uprising demonstrated a rebel strategy of unconventional warfare that differed dramatically from last summer's al-Houthi rebellion. Insurgents used a variety of mobile tactics including snipers, ambushes, and night maneuvers. Recent assassinations confirm a pattern that began with assassination attempts on Saada Police Chief Brigadier Mohammed Saleh Turaiq Deputy Governor, Hassan Manaa, as well as grenade attacks in Sanaa (ref B). Lingering hostilities may also be exacerbated by tribal feuds. Several sources report that the conflict, which began as an uprising of the "Believing Youth," devolved into various tribal vendettas.

15. (U) On April 8, opposition parties issued a joint statement denouncing the second al-Houthi rebellion and attacks on ROYG security forces in Sanaa. This somewhat belated support for the government fueled accusations from the ruling GPC party that opposition leaders encouraged the uprising. Opposition leaders in turn have called for an official investigation into the causes of the Saada conflict.

16. (SBU) Comment: The evidence supports ROYG claims that the conflict in Saada is diminishing. Nevertheless, tensions remain high and with the main rebel leaders still at large, additional sporadic attacks are likely. Unconventional tactics used by the insurgents suggest an ongoing threat of assassinations and terrorist-style operations, perhaps spreading into Sanaa and other regions of the country. Both government and opposition leaders appear to be exploiting the conflict for political gain. End comment.

Krajeski